



Name of Project: Project CARE (Caregivers Running on Empty)

Name of Organization: NC Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Adult Services, Raleigh, NC

Choices for Independence Principle: Consumer Direction

Description:

The North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services is implementing a three-year program of consumer-directed respite for dementia caregivers in ten counties. The program goal is to improve the quality, access, choice, and use of respite services. The aging service delivery system will be bolstered by the integration of dementia-capable resources into the Family Caregiver Support Program, the Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and the state long-term care plan. Expected outcomes pertain to: (1) expanded availability of dementia-specific training, education, and resources; (2) increased family awareness of the value and availability of respite; (3) greater family control over services; and (4) increased use of dementia-specific respite care services by low-income rural and minority families.

Project CARE builds upon the experience of other national consumer-directed care initiatives and could become a North Carolina model for future consumer-directed, dementia-specific respite programs. Project CARE services represent a significant step toward flexible, seamless and sustainable dementia-capable and family-friendly community-based service system.

Project CARE offers a viable portal for multiple caregiver and dementia-specific services in a “no wrong door” service system. The availability of immediate, individualized help and dementia-specific respite funding attracts families who benefit most and who tend to fall through the cracks of the traditional, volunteer, long-term care, aging, and social services system.

Key partners involved in this effort include Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services; Western Carolina Alzheimer’s Association; Duke Family Support Program; and Area Agency on Aging Family Caregiver Support Specialists from ten counties within North Carolina.

Within the ten targeted counties, a total of 588 families were enrolled in Project CARE as of December 2006. Each client received an in-home assessment, ongoing consultation and assistance in arranging respite care. Services are consumer-directed and the level of case management is determined by the family preference and need.

In addition to the families who have benefited from respite support, there was an additional 569 others who received consultation, training and service referral through the Family Consultants and resources of the Western Carolina Alzheimer's Association.

Project CARE utilized the services of 92 different provider agencies, including 56 in-home health agencies, 18 adult day service centers, and 18 long-term care facilities. By offering a variety of respite care options and encouraging consumer-directed choice among multiple providers, Project CARE increases the flexibility of respite care.

Project CARE staff continue to collaborate with the NC Family Caregiver Support Program, Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Program, Direct Care Workers Association of NC, and the NC Department of Health and Human Services Long term Services and Supports Core Planning Workgroup. Through the support and encouragement of Project CARE staff and key partners, a number of assisted living homes continue to offer new day respite services within existing facilities. These new respite resources helped local communities overcome the problems associated with a shortage of in-home aides and adult day programs.

Outreach efforts have been particularly successful through senior centers, provider agencies, DSS, health departments, physicians, geriatric clinics, community health centers, volunteers, libraries, hospitals, information and assistance programs, caregiver coalitions, county planning committees, hospice, faith-based organizations and family support groups. The goal of sustaining and expanding Project CARE was selected as one of the top Division of Aging and Adult Services priorities and was successfully submitted by NC-DHHS to the NC Governor's Office. The NC Senior Tar Heel Legislators also adopted the goal of sustaining and expanding Project CARE.

Key elements that make this program successful include:

- Integrating the needs of family caregivers into public programs and long-term planning.
- Increasing access and availability of a comprehensive range and type of dementia-specific respite services by using the Family Consultant model.
- Offering consumer choice and consumer-directed respite care. Project C.A.R.E. provides flexibility in meeting the caregiver's needs through individualized attention and multiple options in the type, scheduling, and staffing of respite services.
- By developing personal contacts and building bridges to the faith-based community, Family Consultants have helped overcome the cultural and geographic isolation facing dementia caregivers in rural mountainous areas and urban minority communities.
- Connecting families with information and services. Project C.A.R.E. is bringing the expertise of the Alzheimer's Association and other proven resources into the community arena, educating caregivers and providers about techniques that produce a higher quality of life for the client and caregiver.

For more information about this project, contact Karisa Derence at 919-733-0440 (x220)
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Website: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/ad/NCAIzDemo.htm>

For additional information, please see case study of NC ADDGS project, located at:
http://www.aoa.gov/alz/Public/alzabout/Case_Studies/North_Carolina_1_19_06_Final_to_AoA.pdf